UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.151/PC/44
5 July 1991

Original: ENGLISH

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
Third session
Geneva, 12 August - 4 September 1991
Item [**] of the provisional agenda

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS FOR UNCED

Report of the Secretary General of the Conference

The following is a synoptic summary intended to inform the committee and facilitate its work. It elaborates and expands on the brief information provided in A/CONF.151/PC/41 regarding regional preparations. This paper outlines or quotes the main points from recommendations and findings from three preparatory meetings at the ministerial level held in the regions covered by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). This being a synoptic report it cannot fully or accurately reflect the finer points of each declaration and therefore merely serves as a guide to the main regional concerns. The full texts of the regional declarations should be consulted. These have been made available at earlier sessions or may be made available at this session as the case may be.

GE.91-61664/3498B

A review of the regional preparations and the three ministerial level declarations and related documents from the meetings held in Bergen, Bangkok and Mexico City respectively display a number of similarities and consensus regarding key issues of relevance to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. All three regional meetings reaffirmed the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/228, which forms the basis for actions undertaken by the UNCED Secretariat and pledged to support the unique opportunity for action that presents itself in the holding of the Conference in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. All three regions also express concern about and/or endorse or stress the following key issues.

- Concern about the continued deterioration of the state of the environment and degradation of global ecosystems, the major cause being the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption (models of development) that have prevailed particularly in industrialized (developed) countries.

- The declarations further call for urgent action by all countries and the international community to intensify efforts to protect and improve the environment at national, subregional, regional and global levels.

- The particular problems of developing countries must be addressed and since the industrialized countries and regions are the primary sources of environmental damage globally, these countries and regions must also bear the greatest responsibility towards rectifying such damage.

- The declarations stress that the environmental dimension is an integral part of the development process thus making it an imperative for developing countries in addressing sustainable development to have access to environmentally sound technologies and additional financial resources to meet their aspirations to achieve sustainable development.

- The importance of research and development and capacity building is also stressed and the need for active involvement of all sectors of society. There is need to avoid further continued environmental degradation and to have policies based on the precautionary principle.

Since the above comments are common to the three regions they will not be repeated again in the following regional synoptic summaries. The summaries concentrate on the action elements. The three ministerial meetings and their reports/declarations are listed in chronological order.

The Bergen Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development in the ECE Region

The Ministers in the ECE region met at Bergen, Norway, from 14-16 May 1990 at the Regional Conference on "Action for a Common Future".

This second regional inter-ministerial meeting focused on the following four themes: the Economics of Sustainability; Sustainable Energy Use; Sustainable Industrial Activities; and Awareness Raising and Public Participation.

Common challenges within the ECE region

The evolving political and economic processes in Europe will provide new challenges and opportunities for member countries of ECE to co-operate more actively in the actions of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as well as the ECE Regional Strategy for Environmental Protection and Rational Use of Natural Resources.

Member countries of the ECE and the European Community are fully cognizant of their special responsibilities in relation to global environmental problems and are ready to take a lead in the effort towards solving those problems and to assist developing countries in their environmental and developmental efforts.

The Ministers agreed to the following policies, objectives, principles and commitments in support of sustainable development nationally, regionally and globally.

The economics of sustainability

- To integrate environmental considerations with economic and sectoral planning and policies and to encourage all institutions to be accountable for evaluating environmental effects.

- To develop sound national indicators for sustainable development and to supplement national accounting systems in order to reflect as fully as possible the importance of natural resources as depletable or renewable economic assets.

- To make more extensive use of economic instruments in a balanced mix of regulatory approaches in order to increase efficiency of environmental protection.

- Such actions would make prices, particularly those related to energy, reflect environmental costs and benefits more fully and would modify production and consumption patterns.

- To work towards a co-ordinated approach by international organizations, particularly the OECD, ECE and EC.

- To support programmes to increase the flow of capital and environmentally sound technology to developing and East European countries.

- To urge donors and multilateral agencies to take into account the relationship between debt service burdens and the ability of countries to ensure the protection of the environment.

- To address the relationship between population pressures and sustainable development.

- To accelerate the interlinkages between environmental and trade policies.

- To encourage public purchasing practices which favour environmentally sound products and services.

Sustainable energy use

Taking into consideration that the ECE region presently accounts for about 70% of global primary energy and fossil fuel use, we assume a major responsibility to limit or reduce greenhouse gases and other emissions and to lead a global effort to address this matter by promoting energy efficiency, energy conservation and the use of environmentally sound and renewable energy sources.

- To initiate an ECE wide campaign "Energy Efficiency 2000"

- To continue support for the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as the principal forum for scientific assessment related to climate change in support of the early completion of a framework convention on climate change and the development of protocols dealing with, inter alia, greenhouse gases and forestation.

- To recognize the need to stabilize, while ensuring stable development of the world economy, CO2 emissions and emissions of other greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol and to work individually and collectively towards reducing SO2 and NOx emissions

- To recommend the establishment and implementation of adequate abatement and conservation strategies and to introduce and update an energy labelling system and voluntary agreements or mandatory standards, as may be appropriate for products and processes

- To introduce and update comprehensive policies to remove the existing barriers for energy efficient technology and to fund research and development.

- To reduce the harmful effects of the transport sector

- International organizations are requested to exchange environmentally favourable proposals and to facilitate and support international transfer of technology and environmental technologies and related management skills, especially to developing countries

- ECE members to work collectively towards redressing any imbalances related to renewable sources of energy compared to other energy sources.

Sustainable industrial activities

The need to further develop national and regional strategies for preventing pollution from industrial activities:

- To encourage approaches which address minimization of risks to human health and the environment

- To strengthen regulations and economic incentives for promoting environmentally sound production processes

- To encourage the safe and appropriate use and disposal of hazardous substances and to ratify as soon as possible the Basel Convention.

- To encourage investors to apply environmental analysis procedures and the environmental standards required in their home country to investments abroad

- To strengthen cooperation on the prevention and control of transboundary impacts of industrial accidents.

- To strengthen cooperation with industry through mutual consultation with regard to the environmental policies and efficiency of the use of energy and raw materials

- To strengthen sustainability in every sector of production, including forestry, agriculture and fisheries

Awareness raising and public participation

Emphasizing the importance of participation by a well-informed and well-educated society

- To promote environmental education, including non-formal education, for all ages and sectors of society and to reaffirm the special role of women

- To stimulate national and international exchanges of environmental information and to encourage the use of schemes for informing the consumer of the environmental qualities and of the risk. To develop rules for free and open access to information on the environment and to ensure that members of the public are kept informed

- To develop further national and international systems of periodic reporting

- To undertake the prior investment and public reporting of the environmental impact of projects which are likely to have a significant effect on the human health and the environment

- To reaffirm and build on the CSCE conclusions regarding the rights of individuals, groups and organizations concerned with environmental issues and in this connection to contribute to the preparation of a document of environmental rights and obligations for possible adoption at the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development drawing on all relevant texts available

- To increase cooperation among representatives of government, international organizations and all sectors of society for achieving sustainable development

The follow up process

The governments and the European Community agree to continue to work towards sustainable development not only within the ECE region but also globally, with due attention to the needs of developing countries.

Recognize that the different levels of economic and technological development among the ECE countries are an obstacle to progress within the region. Therefore it is important to accelerate the ongoing process ensuring that assistance to East Europe for environmental purposes does not reduce aid to developing countries.

- Promote active and close co-operation between the ECE and relevant multilateral organizations and institutions and welcome the decision of the European Communities to establish an Environment Agency and a European Environment Information and Observation Network, charged with the collection of objective, reliable and comparable information at the European level.

- Recommend the establishment of Round Tables or Committees or comparable processes to promote the integration of environmental considerations in all economic and social activities.

- Continue to improve national and international processes initiated by the Bergen process with the aim for the early completion, if possible in 1991, of the ECE Convention on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context and recognize the need to evaluate progress in the follow up to the Bergen Conference.

- ECE members to ratify or accede to the Montreal Protocol

- International programmes, existing institutions and law leading up to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should be strengthened and ECE to prepare a report on the Bergen Conference as a contribution to UNCED 1992.

- Recommend that the experience gained in the preparation and conduct of the Bergen Conference be used by other Regional Commissions of the United Nations and by the Preparatory Committee of the 1992 Conference and welcome the organization of an NGO's meeting to be held in Paris in 1991.

- Governments and others concerned to contribute generously to the voluntary fund established for the purpose of assisting developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, to participate fully and effectively in the 1992 Conference and in its preparatory process.

ESCAP REGION

The Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development adopted a Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development (ESSD) in Bangkok in October 1990.

The Ministerial declaration of October 1990 stressed in brief the following aspects of environment and development issues in the Region, in addition the general issues already mentioned above.

The Ministers of the ESCAP region, representing more than half of the global population recalled resolution 267 (XLIV) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted at Jakarta in 1988 and the United Nations Development Programme Governing Council decision 90/20 adopted in 1990.

The Ministers, whilst deeply concerned about forest destruction, desertification, watershed degradation, soil erosion, waterlogging and salinization, flooding, destruction of mangroves and corals, loss of biological diversity and pollution of air and water, as well as the ozone layer depletion and the potential rise in the sea level and associated effects of greenhouse gases reiterated that poverty, human health, population pressure and environmental degradation are closely interrelated and must be viewed as an integral part of the development process.

They further affirmed the importance of a proper balance between economic development, population growth, the rational use of natural resources and environmental protection, urging countries in the region to adopt effective and sound population policies.

Whilst affirming that States have sovereign rights, they should not cause damage to other States or areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The special needs of small island developing countries of the region was acknowledged.

The Ministers welcomed the work of ESCAP on a regional strategy taking into consideration existing subregional and national strategies and requested the Executive Secretary in consultation with representatives from United Nations agencies and bodies, multilateral funding organizations and Governments to find ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation and coordination in the development and implementation of regional environment and development activities.

They also stressed the right of access to information for individuals and non-governmental organizations and to participation and implementation of decisions recommending the strengthening of environment activities of non-governmental organizations, promotion of public awareness and people's participation through initiatives which seek to assist such groups.

Environmental education, and awareness building, especially of the younger generations was necessary and therefore research, training, policy and other institutes/centres should be strengthened and encouraged through information exchange, technical assistance and regional co-operation. ESCAP should play an important role in promoting the formulation of a regional sustainable development network of such institutes/centres also involving UNDP regional resident representatives to better assist in the effective follow-up activities.

Senior Officials Meeting

At the request of the ministerial meeting a follow-up Senior Officials Meeting (and its various working groups) was held in February 1991 in Bangkok to consider among other issues a regional strategy paper for the region as well as ESCAP's input to the UNCED process. The Regional Strategy lists priorities and action points based on the State of the Environment report for Asia and the Pacific.

The meeting recognized the need for an appropriate delivery mechanism for implementation of the regional strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development (ESSD) through strengthening of the institutional framework, funding support and monitoring and evaluation systems at the national, subregional and regional levels as well as the need for establishing an interagency coordination mechanism at the regional level under ESCAP. Meetings of senior officials on environment and development and ministerial-level conferences should be held on a regular basis. Under the subject of networking between institutions on environment and development it was noted that some of the developing countries in the region possess specialized technologies such as organic farming, desertification control, and development of new and renewable sources of energy.

Without financial resources, the regional strategy cannot be translated into action. Technical assistance should also be tailored in accordance with the specific needs of the recipient countries.

It was also noted that the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) is presently limited to four areas and it was, therefore, suggested that a green or earth fund proposed at the first PrepCom meeting of UNCED in Nairobi should be seriously considered as well as a Regional Environmental Facility with the initiatives of ESCAP, ADB and UNDP.

The meeting suggested that an interagency co-ordination mechanism (Interagency Committee on Environment and Development) be put into operation as early as possible and recommended that all relevant organizations of the United Nations and intergovernmental bodies be invited to join.

As a concrete step towards promoting interagency co-ordination in implementing the regional strategy on ESSD, the meeting noted that UNESCO, UNDP, ESCAP and UNEP have agreed to undertake a joint programme to analyse country level priorities and actions using a comprehensive matrix approach developed by UNESCO.

The strategy has been formulated to respond to the report on the State of the Environment Report in Asia and the Pacific, 1990. While evolving the strategy, it has been recognized that the countries in the region represent a wide diversity in terms of physiographic, economic as well as cultural characteristics. Therefore, it is not feasible to recommend a set of uniform prescriptions. Nevertheless, there are issues of common concern in the strategy and its components.

The strategy is intended for giving an expression to the concern and commitment of the countries in the ESCAP region. The strategy inter alia outlines some of the priority areas in terms of policy imperatives, strategic directions, and action points at the national and regional levels. It is a framework for facilitating preparation of regional, subregional and national programmes recognizing the sovereign rights and responsibilities of states.

While the strategy emphasizes environmental problems which are common to the countries of the region, it recognizes that problems of global nature also need to be considered at the regional level. The framework of the strategy will be flexible and have in-built options for modification in accordance with evolving environmental and natural resource conditions, including possible new threats as well as opportunities and aims to support on-going activities in identifying the priority actions and implementation of ESSD, particularly in preparation for UNCED.

The basic purpose of the strategy is to ensure environmentally sound and sustainable development for survival and improvement of the quality of life for the population in the region. To this end, the strategy is for pursuing development activities in recognition of the fact that poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated and that environmental protection must be viewed as an integral component of the development process. The objectives of the strategy include the following:

(a) To foster economic growth and meet the basic human needs through environmentally sound and sustainable development;

(b) To secure integration of environmental considerations into development programmes and activities;

(c) To provide a broad framework of priorities and actions including the setting of time frames at the national, regional and global levels, where appropriate.

The meeting recognized the need of finalizing a substantive regional input to UNCED as soon as possible. The regional input paper should have three annexures - abstract of the State of the Environment Report 1990, the Ministerial Declaration, Bangkok, October 1990 and the Regional Strategy on ESSD. The code of conduct on responsibilities of individuals towards environment, a product of NGO/Media Symposium should be transmitted to the UNCED Secretariat through the Centre for our Common Future.

Asia and Pacific input to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992 Brazil

All the environmental and developmental issues of global concern as listed in the General Assembly Resolution 44/228 are highly relevant to the ESCAP region although the nature and extent of the problems are varied because of the diversity in terms of physical and socio-economic characteristics among the countries for the region. However, for the purpose of regional input to the preparatory process for the UNCED 1992, the countries of the ESCAP region will, in particular, draw attention to the following issues:

- improvement of living and working environment for the poor;
- protection of health conditions and improvement in the quality of life;
- protection of the atmosphere by combating climate change, depletion of ozone layer and transboundary air pollution;
- protection and management of oceans and coastal areas, rational use of marine living resources;
- protection and management of land resources by combating deforestation, desertification and land degradation;
- protection and supply of fresh water resources;
- environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes;
- conservation of biological diversity.

Two of these issues i.e. climate change and biological diversity are the subject of an on-going international negotiation and ESCAP countries are taking an active and positive approach in these negotiations, and draw attention to the desirability of their successful conclusion prior to the UNCED in June 1992.

The countries feel that the need for poverty alleviation is most urgent. Environmental deterioration due to pervasive poverty is a matter of great concern in both rural and urban areas in the Asian and Pacific region. The problem of poverty is so enormous that developing countries of the region cannot solve it with domestic resources alone.

Quality of life and good health depend upon the quality of environment. The number of people in the Asian and Pacific region whose basic needs are not met in terms of proper shelter, clean water, basic sanitation an adequate health and nutrition levels was never so large as it is today.

The countries of the region are seriously concerned by the possible consequences of global warming and climate change which could have far-reaching impacts. The effects of climate change could greatly exceed the financial and technical capabilities of many developing countries for appropriate action. Within the region, priority should also be assigned to monitoring and data exchange of environmental conditions and trends.

The marine environment, the largest portion of which is in the Asian and Pacific region, plays a vital role in the functioning of the biosphere. The most important challenge with regard to the oceans is the establishment and strengthening of environmental management systems of the marine areas and resources through international cooperation.

The impacts of deforestation and land degradation are well known. Deforestation continues because the causative factors are not easily eliminated.

More than one third of the population in ESCAP region still does not have access to safe drinking water supplies. More than three fourths of diseases in developing countries in ESCAP region are directly traceable to unsafe drinking water.

Developing countries of ESCAP region will continue to remain vulnerable to toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes as long as their monitoring and control technologies are weak.

In both land and marine ecosystems, the great loss of biodiversity is a matter of serious concern.

ECLAC REGION

Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development

The ministers and representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean countries members of ECLAC met at the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Mexico City from 4-7 March 1991 and adopted a declaration referred to as the "Tlatelolco Platform" which expressed the views and decisions of the region. In brief, the platform addressed the following issues. The full text of the "Tlatelolco Platform" has been issued separately as a conference room paper.

In addition to the issues of common concern to all three regions, the ministers gave their unwavering support for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean. They also welcomed the document "Sustainable Development: Changing Production Patterns, Social Equity and the Environment" prepared by ECLAC and the report of the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment entitled "Our Own Agenda".

Concern was expressed that 20 years after the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration, there has been a severe deterioration of the state of the environment and a serious degradation of global ecosystems. Such degradation is closely linked to the unsustainable models of development that have prevailed mainly in developed countries. On the other hand significant achievements have been made in the region in consolidating its democratic processes. The causes that have given rise to the economic and social problems in the region, inclusive of the external debt problem, still persist and without a solution to the latter problem the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean will be unable to achieve lasting and environmentally sustainable economic and social development. Environmental issues should also not serve as unjustified barriers to international trade, and international, regional and subregional legal instruments should include provisions for the effective transfer of technology.

The peculiarities and vulnerability of small island States exposed to the global economic and environmental climate, deserves special attention.

There is a need for promotion of scientific and technological research and development aimed at strengthening national and regional management capacities of technologies for sustainable development. Global and sectoral research projects, aimed at identifying the obstacles which impede the development and access to these technologies are important and a special international fund should be set up to ensure that the developing countries receive access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies and thus permit them to strengthen their capacity to generate their own technologies. It is essential to train human resources in areas related to the management of the natural resources.

Eligibility for funding should not be exclusively based on the per capita income criteria currently utilized by multilateral financial institutions.

The joint fight against poverty, especially extreme poverty, requires profound changes in economic and social policies. These efforts will be successful in so far as they are the result of, inter alia, access to decent living conditions, adequate levels of social organization, political representation and genuine participation of the population in the determination of their own development paths.

Sound management of the natural patrimony is essential for economic growth and sustainable development, and retrospective and prospective methods should therefore be devised for quantifying the value and depreciation of this natural patrimony.

Thus there is need to complement the existing national instruments for environmental control and regulation with measures which incorporate into the decisions of all sectors the social and environmental costs and which help to satisfy objectives of development. Current models of development have failed to take account of the importance of cultures which have evolved outside the framework of such models. The full recognition of these cultures is needed, since they have extensive knowledge of the natural world and its sustainable use and management.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should ensure the observance of principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 on sovereignty of countries.

The following is a summary of environmental issues which are of paramount importance for the Latin American and Caribbean region, and should be dealt with in the Preparatory Committee as well as at the Conference.

Protection of the atmosphere and climate change

The Latin American and Caribbean countries bear little responsibility for the emergence of these problems. Their participation should be consonant with the economic and technical resources available. The negotiation of a framework convention on climate change should be aimed at minimizing the anthropogenic causes of climate change and its possible adverse effects. The Latin America and Caribbean archipelagos islands and low-lying countries would be particularly vulnerable to them. The specific role of sources and sinks of greenhouse gases should be determined in accordance with the contribution each of them makes. Any agreement should recognize the need of the developing countries to benefit from their natural resources in an environmentally sustainable way.

Under the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol and its amendments the region should benefit from all the financial and technical assistance needed without being required to contract additional external debt.

Biodiversity and biotechnology

The region attaches great importance to the conservation and sustainable management of its ecosystems in order to protects is biological diversity, which constitutes a sovereign part of the national patrimony. Knowledge on biodiversity is part of the patrimony; its use at the international level should therefore be duly regulated and controlled by the country of origin.

Advances in biotechnology and the economic potential for the exploitation of biodiversity make international agreements necessary which include explicit provisions for the equitable sharing of benefits. A convention on the conservation of biological diversity should include obligations for the conservation of biodiversity and should cover the benefits and obligations deriving from biotechnology.

Protection and management of land-based resources

Protection and management of land-based resources should focus on integral, forward-looking and long-term environmental planning and management, based on environmental and developmental integration and public utility.

- Forests

  The economic and ecological potential of all forest ecosystems should be a central item in any multilateral measures taken for the environmental protection and support of sustainable ecosystems.

Such measures, not necessarily mandatory, should complement international instruments referring to the forest/climate and forest/biodiversity interrelationships. The measures should provide for economic valuation of forest resources. Trade in timber and non-timber commodities should be from forests under sustainable management.

- Soil degradation: acidification, erosion and salinization

Soil degradation is the consequence of inappropriate styles of development, over-exploitation and, where the peasant sectors are concerned, the need for survival. A greater effort in support of developing countries should aim at the generation and transfer of indigenous and environmentally sound technologies, as well as scientific research, human resources training and financing.

Protection and management of oceans, seas and coastal zones

The region has great diversity in marine, coastal and ocean resources. Irrational exploitation and land-based contamination constitute grave problems. Existing instruments must be strengthened.

- An inventory of the region's living and non-living resources is needed and "special areas" on the basis of the characteristics of the resources must be established. Exchange of data, improvement of appropriate technologies, links and relations between regional and sub-regional bodies and programmes as well as scientific, technical and financial capacity and management are all needed. So is the establishment of regional marine technology centres, integrated management approaches, banning of the discharge of toxic wastes, cooperation mechanisms for conservation and awareness promotion.

Protection of fresh water quality and supply

Fresh water is vital to the countries of the region. Financing and implementation of plans for administering and managing basins, regional strategies and programmes for water resources, identification of availabilities and potentialities of water resources as well as research and monitoring programmes is vital.

Eradication of poverty in human settlements

Expeditious provision of adequate health and education services and the improvement of housing and related services in urban and rural areas are of priority importance. Co-operation in various interrelated aspects of commerce, external debt, additionality of financial resources and technology transfer are key factors to be addressed.

Urban development and the environment

Lack of resources, inadequate basic services, and a deterioration of the urban environment characterize many cities of the region. Improving the level and quality of life and new mechanisms for the financing are essential.

Environmental management of waste, especially of hazardous and toxic wastes

The regional agreements supplementary to the Basel Convention should receive preferential attention. The Basel Convention should be adopted as soon as possible. A mechanism should be established to prohibit the marketing of harmful or hazardous substances.

The **ECA** and **ESCWA** regions have yet to hold their meetings. The following paragraphs outline regional activities to date.

Economic Commission for Africa

The region has witnessed a series of activities undertaken by sub-regional or regional organizations with the full cooperation of the UNCED Secretariat, ECA as well as the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). Although UNCED has received financial support for sub-regional and regional level preparations, political and administrative problems have caused delays in the preparatory process. One sub-regional meeting was organized under the aegis of UNSO, CILSS and IGADD to formulate a common approach by twenty-five countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. Further activities are underway or contemplated in Southern Africa (SADCC) and the Maghreb.

The UNCED Secretariat has extended its full support to ECA for various activities envisaged as inputs into the UNCED preparatory process.

The regional meeting at the ministerial level has been rescheduled to 11 - 16 July 1991 but its preparations have been seriously affected by the recent political changes in Ethiopia. The ECA is also preparing a number of activities to promote the understanding of major issues before UNCED 1992 in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Public Information and the Organization for African Unity (OAU). UNCED also wishes to record that OAU convened a ministerial meeting from 26 to 30 January, the Pan African Regional Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development at which meeting "The Bamako Commitment on Environment and Development" was adopted. Later the 27th OAU Summit held in Abuja, Nigeria endorsed the Bamako Commitment urging member states to contribute significantly to the Rio Conference.

The UNCED secretariat is also lending its assistance to the convening of a Pan African Symposium of Science and Technology in order to help strengthen Africa's capacity in this area related to environment and development.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Due to the recent serious conflict situation in the region the scheduled preparatory meeting at ministerial level has been deferred until

10 -13 September in Cairo. The conference is being held at a time of regional concern about the state of the environment, after the dramatic events in the region. Twenty-one countries from the ECA and ESCWA regions are expected to participate. Among the issues to be discussed are regional perspectives and environmental challenges of sustainable development in the Arab countries in the 1990s and beyond. Critical environmental issues of global dimensions and regional concerns as well as a regional strategy will also be addressed. In addition to policy issues the conference is also going to devote time to technical work.